



St Anne's Church

Conservation Area

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London Borough of Tower Hamlets

October 2007

Introduction

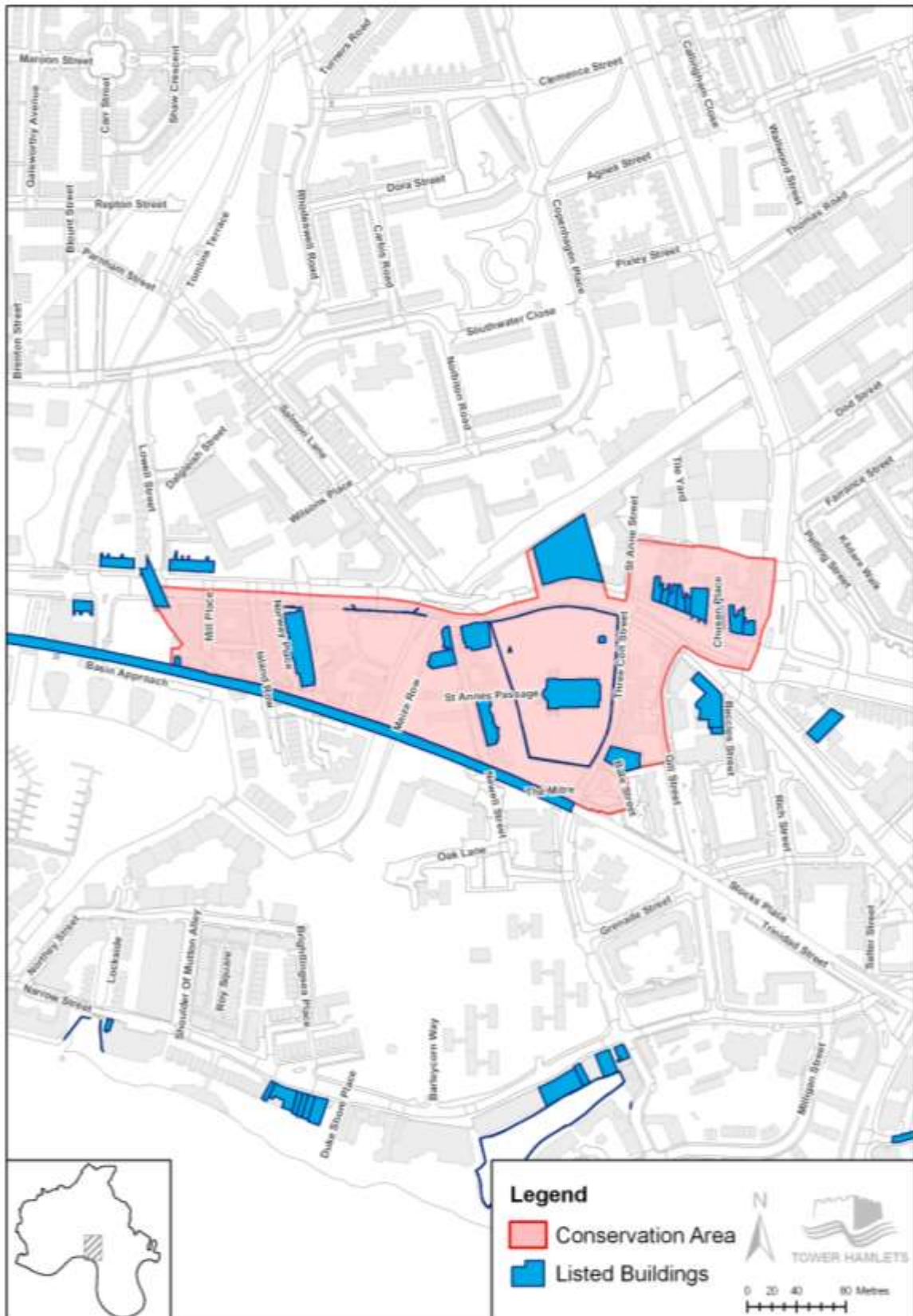
Conservation Areas are parts of our local environment with special architectural or historic qualities. They are created by the Council, in consultation with the local community, to preserve and enhance the specific character of these areas for everybody.

This guide has been prepared for the following purposes:

- To comply with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69(1) states that a conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”
- To provide a detailed appraisal of the area's architectural and historic character.
- To provide an overview of planning policy and propose management guidelines on how this character should be preserved and enhanced in the context of appropriate ongoing change.

Many significant sites within the St Anne's Church Conservation Area are currently undertaking redevelopment which will fundamentally alter the character of this part of London, in respect to the setting of St Anne's Church and churchyard.

Because of this significant ongoing change, this document should be revised once construction has settled, and the new character of the Limehouse area has established itself.



ST ANNES CHURCH CONSERVATION AREA

This map is indicative only and is not a planning document. For further information please contact the Council.

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1. Character Appraisal

Overview

The St Anne's Church Conservation Area was designated in July 1969. The Conservation Area is bounded by Commercial Road to the north and the Docklands Light Railway line (once the old London and Blackwall Railway viaduct) to the south, with the Limehouse Cut and Three Colt Street running north-south through the Conservation Area. The area contains Grade II listed buildings such as the Limehouse Town Hall and Library and features Nicholas Hawksmoor's St Anne's Church, Limehouse (Ecclesiastical Grade A listed). The purpose of the designation was to safeguard the visual setting of St Anne's Church, which provides a focal point and visual marker in Limehouse.

History

In 1711, the Act of Parliament in England set up an organisation, the "Commission for Building Fifty New Churches" in and around London. Whilst this target was not achieved, twelve churches were built through the 1711 Act of Parliament for the rapidly growing city of London. Three of these churches within the borough, namely St Anne's Church Limehouse, St George-in-the-East and Christ Church Spitalfields were designed by British architect, Nicolas Hawksmoor (1661 – 1736).

Credited as one of Hawksmoor's 6 great East London churches, St Anne's Church in Limehouse is Ecclesiastical Grade I listed. The foundations of St Anne's Church were laid out in open fields in 1712, the church laying central to the churchyard. When Commercial Road was built, it sliced off the north corner of the churchyard. Its western tower is visually dominant in the local scene and from the River Thames and became a landmark for every ship entering the Pool of London. The church expresses a Doric order, limited in adornment but consistent in its angularity. St Anne's Church is stone-faced on all facades with tall arched windows. The steeple was built in 1718-1719, with the church furnished between 1723-5, but only consecrated in 1730. The church was gutted by fire on Good Friday, 1850 and was later restored by Philip Hardwick in 1851-1854. It was restored by Julian Harrap in 1983-1993, when tubular steel trusses

were added to support the roof. The historic St Anne's churchyard contains mature trees and the Grade II listed war memorial.

In 1802–4, Commercial Road was laid out through open fields as a quick and direct route between the City of London and the new East and West India Docks. This junction was constructed in order to bring together three new main thoroughfares of the East End; namely East India Dock Road, West India Dock Road and Commercial Road. Such main roads linked the Docks, to allow for the transport of goods from the ships into the City. When the roads were built, Stepney and Limehouse were still small villages and some distance away from London.

Limehouse became part of the industrial East End. In 1769-70, the River Lea navigation system was reconstructed as a canal to shorten some water journeys. The Limehouse Cut was opened in 1770 to provide a short cut for grain and malt barges, from the River Lea at Bromley by Bow to the River Thames at Limehouse. The Regent's Canal and Dock (now Limehouse Basin) was completed in 1820 and provided a navigable route to the Grand Union Canal. Between 1853 and 1864, this end of the Limehouse Cut was diverted through the Regent's Canal Dock, avoiding the need to navigate around the Isle of Dogs.

To coincide with the development of the docks and freedom of trade, the 1830s saw the arrival of railways in the area. The London & Blackwall Railway opened from the City and Blackwall in 1840 and was extended to Bow in 1845–49 and the Isle of Dogs in 1865–72. This link to the main line was strengthened in 1880 with the Limehouse Curve between the main London and Blackwall line and its extension to Bow, crossing Commercial Road via the wrought-iron lattice girder bridge. Although the establishment of the canals, Commercial Road and the railway between London and its docklands stimulated industry in the area, the amenity of the hamlet was largely destroyed in the process. In order to relieve the pressure of traffic on Commercial Road, the Limehouse Link was implemented and was hidden within a tunnel beneath the Limehouse Basin. This has led to the Limehouse precinct as being developed as a desirable riverside address. The Grade II listed Viaduct of the London and Blackwall railway lies parallel with the south side of Commercial Road and crosses the

Limehouse Basin. It was refurbished in 1984-7 for the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) line.

Character

The prevailing character of the St Anne's Church Conservation Area is defined by the mixed uses of principal public buildings of Limehouse amongst a more recent residential townscape. There remains an acknowledgement of the maritime history and strong industrial character with the DLR line and old viaduct and the Limehouse Cut dividing the area, creating pockets of land surrounding the centralised St Anne's churchyard.

St Anne's Church has formed a landmark in this part of the Borough since its construction. Its prominence has been secured by a significant group of listed buildings and respectful low scale and urban character which surrounds the historic church. To the west of the church, the Grade II listed Town Hall and former British Sailors Society (at Nelson's Wharf) on either side of Newell Street, reiterates the district's once civil importance. The Limehouse Town Hall was constructed in 1879 and is of white brick with white stone dressings and rusticated quoins to ground floor with a pediment over its central entrance. In the 1920s, the hall housed the Local Rates Office and Infant Welfare Centre. It endured severe blast damage during the Second World War and remained closed for a number of years. The Town Hall was since restored and used as Council Offices until the 1970s when it became the National Museum of Labour History, mostly displaying exhibits on London Labour Dock History. Currently, the Limehouse Town Hall houses a community of artists.

Further to the west along Commercial Road and Wharf Lane stands the 1900 built Limehouse District Library, originally the Passmore Edwards Library. Grade II listed, the library was constructed of white stone and yellow brick, with its ground floor of rusticated white stone. The library is 2 storeys tall plus basement and attic. In the 1970s, the Limehouse Library became the home for the Borough's non-fiction collection. The library is currently closed and awaits future development. On the opposite side of Norway Place is the notable Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Church

Limehouse (consecrated in 1945) which completes this grouping of significant public buildings.

The row of Grade II listed and non listed terraces at 789-821 Commercial Road are typically commercial on ground floor with residential units on upper levels. The row of terraces follows the curved alignment of Commercial Road, expressing varying facades and a staggered streetscape frontage. No. 803 Commercial Road is angled, irregular to the remaining streetscape and instead exposes a flank wall to the main road. The Grade II listed terraces at 815–21 Commercial Road are early 19th century with first floor windows within arches. This is juxtaposed with the small 2 storey building at 811 Commercial Road, which is also Grade II listed.

The Limehouse Cut and Grade II listed viaduct all contribute to the character and historic interpretation of the area's industrial past and has been successfully preserved as a backdrop for residential development, prompting Limehouse as an established residential area.

Land Use

The land use character of the area is mixed, comprising public buildings such as St Anne's Church and Limehouse Town Hall, amongst a predominantly residential land use. Commercial uses are found at ground level along Commercial Road. South of Commercial Road and set within the Conservation Area, recent proposals for development demonstrate the changing land use in the area, from historically commercial and public uses to residential use, taking advantage of the views and amenity of the evolving residential status in Limehouse.

Scale

The buildings in the St Anne's Conservation Area provide an appropriately low-rise context for the tower that rises above the St Anne's Church. The western approach to the church is along St Anne's passage, a narrow cobbled lane leading straight to the main entrance stairs of the church. This is the most spectacular approach to St

Anne's, with the huge scale of the church standing in sharp contrast to the modest 18th century 2-3 storey scale of the approach lane. The Limehouse Rectory at 5 Newell Street and terraces between nos. 11–23 Newell Street are 2-3 storeys with basements reinforcing the low scale surrounds in respect to the church grounds. The Limehouse Town Hall is also 2 storeys in scale with a frontage to Newell Street and presence on Commercial Road in grouping with the church. To the east of the church is the block bounded by Three Colt Street and Gill Street. This block is currently under development, but the Grade II listed Limehouse Church Institute (2 storeys) and Public House (3 storeys) on Three Colt Street remain visible from the St Anne's churchyard. The mixed use terraces at 789–819 Commercial Road are varying in scale between 2-3 storeys.

Open Spaces

The historic churchyard of St Anne's is currently used as a public garden. The Christian burial ground has headstones and tombs scattered through the open space, including the notable pyramidal tomb and Grade II listed war memorial, featuring the 1914–18 bronze figure of Christ in blessing. The churchyard's boundary wall is Grade II listed as are the original gate, piers and railings. The wealth of mature trees separates the churchyard from the heavily trafficked Commercial Road to its north and the DLR line to its south, protecting the serenity of the church.

In combination with St Anne's churchyard, the Conservation Area also contains the former rectory garden on the western side of the canal. This garden is shielded from Commercial Road behind a Grade II listed, 18th century or early 19th century stock brick wall. The garden faces the canal but is otherwise enclosed and somewhat concealed from the Commercial Road thoroughfare. The two public gardens in St Anne's churchyard and the former rectory garden combined with the Limehouse Cut running between them, provide a centralised group of open space elements.

Views

Hawkmoor's St Anne's Church is the most significant built landmark and historic focal point in Limehouse. Its prominent tower projects above the tree canopy of the churchyard and is visible from a considerable distance and was designed to be visible by ships in the local docks and from the Thames. The church is viewed across the open space of the churchyard, with low scale residential streets enclosing the local church and gardens. St Anne's Church tower can be seen above the roofline of the Town Hall and provides a backdrop to many long views in the precinct. The church also terminates Newell Street. King's Wharf between Newell Street and the Cut has recently been landscaped by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), providing a route to the canal and unveils views to recent riverside development.

Summary

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history and significant architecture dating from the 18th century. The character and appearance of the area, as described in this appraisal, define its special qualities. There are minor improvements that could be made to buildings in the Conservation Area, but overall this has little impact on the qualities that led to its designation.

2. Management Guidelines

Overview

This Management Plan has been prepared in consultation with the community, to set out the Borough's commitment to high quality management of Conservation Areas and their settings. The Development Design and Conservation Team operate within the context of the Development and Renewal Directorate of the Council, alongside Major Projects, Development Control, Strategy and Building Control.

Areas are as much about history, people, activities and places as they are about buildings and spaces. Preserving and enhancing the Borough's architectural and historic built heritage over the next decades is of vital importance in understanding the past and allowing it to inform our present and future.

Conservation Areas also promote sustainability in its widest sense. The Council is committed to this in Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy its Local Development Framework (LDF). The re-use of historic buildings and places is environmentally responsible as it protects the energy and resources embodied in them and combats global warming.

Consideration of appropriate amendments to the boundary of the Conservation Area, and recommendations for additions to the register of listed buildings, either the statutory or local list, will be considered by the Council.

Who is this document for?

This is an inclusive document which will engage with many different people and organisations. It will depend on the support of the community to achieve its objectives. It is aimed primarily at the residents, businesses, developers and others living and working in the area. The Conservation Area belongs to its residents, as well as the whole community, and their priorities will be reflected in these documents after the consultation process.

The document has also been prepared to align conservation objectives within different parts of the council, and provide a single point of reference for the management of the area. It represents our shared commitment to conserve the special architectural and historic character, and to help manage sensitive new development and refurbishment where appropriate to successfully preserve and enhance the quality and character of the area.

Outline Guidance on Applications

Before carrying out any work in this area, you will need to apply for consent even for minor work such as replacing railings. These consents include planning, listed building and Conservation Area consent, as well as others for work such as felling trees.

When planning applications in a Conservation Area are decided, the planning authority will pay special attention to whether the character of the area is preserved or enhanced. The character of St Anne's Church is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In St Anne's Church, as in other Conservation Areas, planning controls are more extensive than normal. Consent is required to demolish any building, and a higher standard of detail and information is required for any application. When applying for listed building consent, please note that all parts of the building, including its interior walls, ceilings and all other internal features, are protected. Some buildings are nationally (statutorily) listed, and some are locally listed by the Borough to indicate buildings that the Borough wishes to protect.

The exact information required will vary with each application, but in general applications must include:

- A clear design statement explaining the reasons behind the various architectural, masterplanning or other design decisions.
- Contextual plans, sections and elevations of existing buildings

- Drawings, including construction details, produced at larger scale (eg. 1:50 or 1:20) clearly indicating the nature of the work proposed.
- Additional detail regarding materials and construction.
- Photos of the condition of existing building (including details where appropriate).

More details are available on the Tower Hamlets website. If in any doubt, the Council welcomes and encourages early requests for advice or information.

When alterations are proposed to listed buildings, complying with the building regulations can be particularly complex, and early consideration of building control issues can help identify potential problems early in the process.

Policies Relevant to the Conservation Area and how they are Implemented:

Any new development should have regard to national, regional and local planning policy.

- At the national level, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Tower Hamlets to designate Conservation Areas in “areas of special architectural or historic interest”, and to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. National policy for planning and the historic environment is set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15).
- At the regional level, policy 4B.1 of the London Spatial Development Strategy (or London Plan) states that ‘The Mayor will seek to ensure that developments ... respect London’s built heritage.’
- At the local level, the new Local Development Framework (LDF) of Tower Hamlets states that ‘the Council will protect and enhance the historic environment of the borough’. This is described in detail in policy CP49 of the Core Strategy of the LDF. In addition, applicants should note policy CP46 to ensure that access issues are properly addressed in work carried out in a Conservation Area.

Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

Ecclesiastical Grade A (I)

- St Anne's Church, Limehouse

Grade II

- St Anne's churchyard Walls, Railings, Gates and Gate Piers
- St Anne's churchyard War Memorial
- Garden Wall to former St Anne's Rectory
- Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road
- Limehouse District Library
- Gate, Piers and Iron Railings at Limehouse District Library
- 795 Commercial Road
- 797 Commercial Road
- 799 Commercial Road
- 801 Commercial Road
- 803 Commercial Road
- 805 Commercial Road
- 3 Lamp Standards on pavement in front of no. 805 Commercial Road
- 811 Commercial Road
- 815 and 817 Commercial Road
- 819 and 821 Commercial Road
- 777-785 Commercial Road
- 31 Three Colt Street
- 2 Newell Street
- 4 Newell Street
- 11-23 Newell Street
- Former Railway Lookout Tower, Mill Place
- Railway Viaduct to north of Regents Canal Dock between and including Branch Road Bridge and Limehouse Cut up to Three Colt Street
- Section of the Limehouse Curve Bridge, railway bridge at the junction with Lowell Street

Highways and Transportation Issues

The quality of the streetscape, the surface materials, street furniture and other features can all be integral parts of the character of Conservation Areas. Any work carried out should respect this historic character. Anyone involved in development which impacts on public spaces should refer to the Council's Street Design Guide, TfL's own Streetscape Guidance and English Heritage's 'Streets for All' document. The ongoing cost of maintenance should also be considered carefully.

Within this part of Limehouse, Commercial Road is the main and busiest carriageway through the area and in fact the Borough. Options could be investigated for calming the speed of this road in deference to the historic importance of the church, and for improving the quality of the street environment.

Within the churchyard and the rest of the Conservation Area, the quality of the public realm, the surface materials, street furniture and other features are all integral parts of the character of the Conservation Area. Any work carried out should respect this historic character. Anyone involved in development which impacts on public spaces should refer to the Council's Street Design Guide, TfL's own Streetscape Guidance and English Heritage's 'Streets for All' document.

Works by statutory services (gas, electricity, water etc) have the potential to damage historic ground surfaces or ancient underground structures. Early consultation with the conservation team is encouraged for any works.

Opportunities and Potential for Enhancement

St Anne's Church's tower is the most visible element of the Conservation Area and in Limehouse. In consideration of new development proposals, views of the tower from surrounding sites and the historic setting of the church are of utmost importance. These long views should be maintained and protected where appropriate, continuing the historic ties between the 'Limehouse Church' and the community. The continuous maintenance of the church and churchyard, including its benches, signage and tombstones should be ensured.

The Grade II listed Limehouse District Library is in desperate need of repairs and refurbishment. A suitable use for the former Passmore Edwards Library is vital to ensure the preservation of this historic 1900 building, designed by Messrs Clarkson Architects. Recent vandalism of the statue of the former Prime Minister, Clement Attlee at the foreground of the library, has resulted in the statue being boxed up until its restoration/ re-casting is commissioned. This will occur simultaneously to the refurbishment of the main library building.

Noticeably, one of the group of 3 lamp standards in front of 805 Commercial Road is absent. Dated back to the 19th century, the group of 3 cast iron lamp standards with lamps bear the inn name in front of the Star of the East Public House. Its statutory Grade II listing warrants its replacement and reinstatement at this roadway site.

The Commercial Road carriageway has been part of the character of the setting of St Anne's Church for over two hundred years. The quality of the street environment will indeed impact the character and setting of the Conservation Area, in which the Council seeks to preserve and enhance. It would be an improvement if traffic could be slowed down in deference to the historic value of the Conservation Area.

As Limehouse is rapidly evolving into a residential district, any scope for development within the Conservation Area should be assessed according to its impact on the setting of St Anne's Church and the significant Grade II listed buildings in the area.

Trees, Parks and Open Spaces

St Anne's churchyard and the associated former rectory gardens have been well preserved to complement its residential surrounds and the Limehouse Cut. The green open spaces, pathway, mature trees and park furniture have all been well maintained.

The management of parks and open spaces are particularly important to preserving the character of the St Anne's Church Conservation Area. As used as a public garden, it is considered very important that the sacred character of the grounds is preserved and this principle should be observed in all future management and maintenance of

the churchyard gardens. The St Anne's churchyard and developments facing Newell Street west and similarly the former rectory gardens are protected and covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) Area. Moreover, the recently landscape open space pocket of King's Wharf between Newell Street and Limehouse Cut must be well maintained to provide an attractive through-route to the canal.

All trees in Conservation Areas are protected, and some trees are also covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). Notice must be given to the authority before works are carried out to any tree in the Conservation Area, and some works require specific permission. More information can be found in the Council's Guide to Trees, and on the Tower Hamlets website. Carrying out works to trees without the necessary approval can be a criminal offence, and the Council welcomes early requests for advice.

Equalities:

Valuing diversity is one of the Council's core values, and we take pride in being one of the most culturally rich and diverse boroughs in the UK. This core value has driven the preparation of this document and will continue to inform changes to this document in the future. These values will also inform changes to buildings and places where this document provides guidance to ensure inclusivity for all sections of the community.

This Character Appraisal and Management Guidelines will support the Council's aims:

- a strong spirit of community and good race relations in Tower Hamlets.
- to get rid of prejudice, discrimination and victimisation within the communities we serve and our workforce
- to make sure that the borough's communities and our workforce are not discriminated against or bullied for any reason, including reasons associated with their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religious belief.

Please contact us if you feel that this document could do more to promote equality and further the interests of the whole community.

Publicity

The existence of the Conservation Area will be promoted locally to raise awareness of current conservation issues and to invite contributions from the community.

Consideration of Resources Needed to Conserve the Historic Environment:

The most effective way to secure the historic environment is to ensure that buildings can continue to contribute to the life of the local community, preferably funding their own maintenance and refurbishment. Commercial value can be generated directly from the building, through its use as a dwelling or office, or through its role in increasing the attractiveness of the area to tourists and visitors. However, it should be noted that economic reasons alone will not in themselves justify the demolition or alteration of a building in a Conservation Area. The Council will consider grant aid to historic buildings and places.

In order to meet today's needs without damaging the historic or architectural value of a building, a degree of flexibility, innovation and creative estate management may be required.

Ongoing Management and Monitoring Change:

To keep a record of changes within the area, dated photographic surveys of street frontages and significant buildings and views will be made every 5 years. Also, public meetings will be held every 5 years to maintain communications between all stakeholders and identify new opportunities and threats to the Conservation Area as they arise.

The Council recognises the contribution of the local community in managing Conservation Areas, and will welcome proposals to work collaboratively to monitor and manage the area.

In addition, the Borough's Annual Monitoring Report, prepared with the new LDF, will assess progress on the implementation of the whole Local Development Scheme, including policies relevant to conservation.

Enforcement Strategy:

Appropriate enforcement, with the support of the community, is essential to protect the area's character. The Council will take prompt action against those who carry out unauthorised works to listed buildings, or substantial or complete demolition of buildings within a Conservation Area. Unauthorised work to a listed building is a criminal offence and could result in a fine and/or imprisonment. Likewise, unauthorised substantial or complete demolition of a building within a Conservation Area is also illegal. It is therefore essential to obtain Conservation Area or Listed Building Consent before works begin.

If listed buildings are not maintained in good repair, then the Council can step in to ensure that relevant repairs are carried out. In some circumstances, the Council itself may undertake essential repairs and recover the cost from the owner. The Council has powers of compulsory purchase, if necessary to protect Listed Buildings.

The Council will enforce conservation law wherever necessary, and will consider the introduction of Article 4 Directions to remove Permitted Development Rights where appropriate.

Further Reading and Contacts

- The Buildings of England (London 5: East). Cherry, O'Brien and Pevsner.

The Council encourages and welcomes discussions with the community about the historic environment and the contents of this document. Further guidance on all aspects of this document can be obtained on our website at www.towerhamlets.gov.uk or by contacting:

Tel: 020 7364 5009

Email: dr.majorprojects@towerhamlets.gov.uk

This document is also available in Libraries, Council Offices and Idea Stores in the Borough.

For a translation, or large print, audio or braille version of this document, please telephone 0800 376 5454. Also, if you require any further help with this document, please telephone 020 7364 5372.

Also, you may wish to contact the following organizations for further information:

Mile End Old Town Residents Association

English Heritage

www.english-heritage.org.uk

The Georgian Group

www.georgiangroup.org.uk

Victorian Society

www.victorian-society.org.uk

20th Century Society

www.c20society.org.uk

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings www.spab.org.uk

Listed Buildings at Risk:

<check against Register>

Any other threats to the Conservation Area

(to be written at public consultation stage)

Priorities for Action (1-5)

(to be written at public consultation stage)